

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 051437Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3646

INFO AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 22677

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINR TU LY US FR

SUBJECT: FURTHER QUAI COMMENT ON LIBYAN-TUNISIAN
RELATIONS

REFS: (A) STATE 187176 (NOTAL); (B) PARIS 21701

1. ON AUGUST 4 WE AGAIN EXCHANGED VIEWS WITH THE QUAI ON TUNISIAN-LIBYAN RELATIONS. ACTING DIRECTOR FOR THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA SERVANT'S EVALUATION OF THE LIBYAN "THREAT" WAS SIMILAR TO THAT REPORTED REF B. HE SPECULATED THAT TUNISIA'S DEMARCHES ASKING FOR A GESTURE OF SUPPORT WERE AT LEAST PARTLY INTENDED TO TEST ITS FRIENDS.

2. THE FRENCH HAD DECIDED TO SEND THREE SHIPS AND SIX PLANES FOR BOURGUIBA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS BEFORE TUNISIA MADE ITS PLEA FOR SUPPORT, SERVANT SAID, AND WERE DELIGHTED TO BE ABLE TO SHOW THEIR SYMPATHY SO PAINLESSLY. THE LIBYANS, AS THE FRENCH HAD EXPECTED, CONFIDENTIAL

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WERE UPSET AND IN A DEMARCHE TO THE FRENCH, OBJECTED

TO THE FRENCH SHIPS' JOINING U.S. AND EGYPTIAN SHIPS
IN TUNISIAN WATERS. THE LIBYANS EVEN DELIVERED A
VEILED THREAT BY REMINDING THE FRENCH THAT "SOME
COUNTRIES REPRESENT THE PAST, OTHERS THE FUTURE". THE
FRENCH EXPRESSED "ASTONISHMENT" AT THE LIBYAN REACTION,
AND RECALLED THEIR LONG, CLOSE, AND FRIENDLY RELATION-
SHIP WITH TUNISIA WHICH MADE THE VISIT "NATURAL" AND
INVOLVED NO JOINT ACTION WITH EGYPT AND THE U.S.
THE LIBYANS DID NOT PRESS THE MATTER. INTERESTINGLY,
SERVANT SAID, CONTRARY TO FRENCH EXPECTATIONS,
THE ALGERIANS DID NOT REACT TO THE SHIPS' VISIT.

3. FINALLY, SERVANT SAID A TUNISIAN WARSHIP
SHOT AT A FRENCH TANKER AUGUST 3 OR 4, WOUNDING ONE
SEAMAN SERIOUSLY. THE FRENCH ARE CONVINCED THE SHELLING
WAS AN ERROR BUT ARE AWAITING THE TUNISIAN EXPLANATION.
GAMMON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976PARIS22677
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760302-0164
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760883/aaaacvnq.tel
Line Count: 78
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 187176, 76 PARIS 21701
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <26 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER QUAI COMMENT ON LIBYAN-TUNISIAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, TU, LY, US, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006